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F.B.I. Believes a High Soviet Intelligence Official Is Visiting U.S. Under an Alias and Is Trailing Him

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WASHINGTON, April 18 — The Federal Bureau of Investigation believes that for the last three weeks a high ranking Soviet intelligence official has been visiting the United States under an assumed name on his passport.

The F.B.I. has been trailing the man since he arrived March 27 in New York with an aide, also identified as an intelligence officer.

On the basis of its own investigation, the F.B.I. is convinced that Vasily V. Kuznetsov, the name under which the man under observation is traveling, is actually Vasily V. Mozshechikov, a prominent official in the Soviet Union's Committee on State Security, known by its Russian initials as K.G.B. His job in the agency was described by some United States sources as director of the Division of Overseas Operations, by others as Deputy Director of the American Division.

His companion, who is traveling under the name Nikolai F. Vinogradov, believed to be his real name, was identified by

United States officials as a lower ranking official in the Soviet intelligence agency.

The State Department, which granted a temporary visa to an official identified as Kuznetsov, was not convinced that it had been duped. A spokesman said the department was checking on whether a Soviet official had entered the United States under an alias and, at this point, could neither confirm nor deny that he was really Mr. Mozshechikov.

Temporary Visa Granted

The F.B.I. declined all comment on the identity of the two Soviet officials. But high State Department circles indicated there was no doubt that the bureau privately was "leaking" information that a prominent Soviet intelligence official had been permitted to enter the United States under a false name.

Articles about the Russians' visit first appeared in The Daily News of New York and in U.S. News and World Report.

From information thought to be coming from F.B.I. sources it appeared that the bureau had no doubt about the identity of "Kuznetsov." But it appeared

that the information conveyed to the State Department was not so definite.

The F.B.I. notified the State Department shortly after the two Russians had arrived in New York on a flight from Montreal. The report to the State Department, it was said, did not definitely identify one as Mozshechikov. Rather, it was said to have reported unsubstantiated information from an informant that Kuznetsov was Mozshechikov.

The F.B.I. information was believed to have been obtained from a Russian defector. Following its usual practice, the bureau is believed to have circulated among its informants pictures of the two Russians, who had applied for visas. One of

the informants identified Mozshechikov.

At the request of the Soviet Foreign Ministry, the State Department granted temporary visas to two Soviet officials with the names Kuznetsov and Vinogradov. Both persons, according to State Department sources, were known to the United States Embassy in Moscow as "Soviet diplomats."

The information supplied by the Foreign Ministry was that the two officials were to be assigned temporarily to the Soviet Embassy in Washington. The two nations have a reciprocal practice of granting temporary diplomatic visas, and visas for a 35-day stay in the United States were readily granted.

Yesterday, the State Department's spokesman, Robert J. McCloskey, said the department had no reason to doubt that officials by the names of Kuznetsov and Vinogradov were the ones who had actually arrived in the United States. Today he was less definite, saying that the department was checking on their identity.

Two days after their arrival in New York, the two Russians drove by car to Washington, and were reported to be under constant surveillance. The two spent most of their time in the Soviet Embassy, but also did some sightseeing, visiting the cherry blossom festival.

With State Department permission, they returned to New York on April 11, staying at the Soviet mission to the United

Nations. Riding in a chauffeured limousine, they were reported to have gone to Ohrbach's to shop.

The purpose of their trip remains unclear to United States officials. The general surmise is that the Russians examine security arrangements are on an inspection trip to the mission. One possibility is that they are investigating the security aspects of a proposed new site for the Soviet Embassy here.

While primarily responsible for internal security, in much the same manner as the F.B.I., the Soviet agency also assumes some intelligence functions, handled in the United States by the Central Intelligence Agency. There was doubt in American circles, however, that the

Soviet agency would send such prominent officials to engage in espionage work, such as making arrangements for new spy networks.

Their visas expire on April 30. The State Department could cut short the visas if it determined that the visa application had been fraudulent. Mr. McCloskey, the State Department spokesman said today in response to questions that the use of an alias and the deliberate withholding of one's true name was "normally considered a fraud" under a section of the Immigration and Naturalization Law.

It appeared, however, that the State Department would be reluctant to take such punitive action. In the first place, there would be the difficulty of def-

initely establishing that Kuznetsov was really Mozshechikov. The only proof would probably be fingerprints, and Soviet officials refuse to give them to American authorities.

But more important from the State Department's view, such punitive action could upset the practice under which temporary visas are used by both nations to send security or intelligence agents, sometimes under pseudonyms, into the other country.

The assignment of Soviet intelligence officers to the United States is not unusual. Many of the officials assigned to the Soviet Embassy and to the mission as well as some Soviet journalists are known to United States intelligence agencies to be

working for Soviet intelligence.